



Morning Alert - Friday, July 20, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TBS, and Fuji TV continued to give extensive coverage to the blistering heat, saying that temperatures have reached life-threatening levels in many parts of Japan. NTV led with a report that Kazakh figure skater and Olympic medalist Denis Ten was stabbed to death in an attack in Kazakhstan on Thursday. TV Asahi led with a report that rivers in Hiroshima are at risk of flooding even with a small amount of rain since soil from landslides has raised riverbeds.

Top stories in national dailies included the expected passage today of a bill related to the legalization of casinos (Asahi, Mainichi, Sankei), a plan by the Transport Ministry to penalize Nippon Cargo for falsifying maintenance records (Yomiuri), and an increase in the use of renewable energy by Japanese companies (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary Pompeo reportedly says denuclearization deal “may take some time”

Yomiuri wrote that Secretary of State Pompeo reportedly said at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday that “it may take some time to get where we need to go” in forging a denuclearization deal with North Korea. He reportedly added that sanctions will continue to be enforced and there is still a lot of work to do.

DPRK allegedly asks U.S. to accept end of Korean War in exchange for denuclearization steps

Asahi ran a Seoul-dated report claiming that it has learned from multiple sources connected to U.S.-DPRK relations that Vice Chairman Kim Yong Chol asked Secretary of State Pompeo at their talks in Pyongyang on July 6-7 for the United States to accept a declaration of the end of the Korean

War as a precondition for taking denuclearization steps. The paper speculated that officially ending the war would help the DPRK to maintain its current regime because it would be difficult for the United States to take a hardline approach using military power if the current state of war on the Korean Peninsula is brought to an end. While quoting Kim Yong Chol as allegedly telling the Secretary that accepting a declaration of the end of the war would be the best way for the United States to recognize the DPRK as a “normal country,” the paper wrote that it is unclear what kind of denuclearization steps North Korea would take.

Japan, China to discuss economic development cooperation in third countries

Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the governments of Japan and China are making final arrangements for holding in Beijing in September the first meeting of a special committee to discuss the two nations’ cooperation in third countries under China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative. The paper speculated that the meeting is aimed at discussing the details of cooperation ahead of Prime Minister Abe’s envisaged visit to China by the end of this year. According to the sources, Tokyo and Beijing are mulling the expansion of the Bangkok Mass Transit System as their first cooperative project.

ECONOMY

TPP-11 nations agree on procedures for accepting new members

Yomiuri, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the chief negotiators of the TPP-11 nations wrapped up their two-day conference in Hakone on Thursday, noting that they agreed to accept additional members after the effectuation of the pact in 2019 or later. Yomiuri wrote that they also agreed to set up unified procedures for discussions with nations wishing to join the free trade pact in the future. Sankei claimed that Japan is planning to urge the United States in their expected talks on “free, fair and reciprocal” trade to return to the TPP and rethink its plan to impose restrictions on auto imports.

In a related development, Asahi and Sankei wrote that Singapore announced on Thursday that it has completed the domestic procedures to ratify the TPP-11, becoming the third country following Mexico and Japan.

LDP taskforce asks TPP minister not to discuss FTA at new trade talks with U.S.

Nikkei wrote that on Thursday an LDP taskforce on the TPP told Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi that the new trade talks to be launched with the United States should not be a venue for preliminary consultations on an FTA. The paper speculated that the two nations may hold the first meeting of the planned talks at the end of July or later.

SECURITY

Okinawa governor to rescind landfill permit

Asahi wrote that Okinawa Vice Governor Jahana told reporters on Thursday that Governor Onaga will indicate by the end of the month his intention to withdraw the landfill permit for the FRF construction at Henoko that was granted by his predecessor. Asahi wrote that the governor will use the cancellation of the permit as a last resort to stop the construction because the GOJ is planning to start pouring sand and earth into waters off Henoko on Aug. 17. However, the central government plans to take the matter to court to request a stay of the rescindment. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kotaro Nogami said at a press briefing on Thursday that the GOJ will proceed with the work at Henoko based on relevant laws and regulations. Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei ran similar reports.

GOJ to resume consultations with Saga on GSDF Osprey deployment

Yomiuri wrote that Defense Minister Onodera will visit Saga Prefecture on July 23 to discuss the GOJ plan to deploy the GSDF Osprey at Saga Airport in the future. The paper speculated that the defense minister will seek local understanding for the plan by explaining the need for the deployment for the defense of the Nansei Islands. Nikkei ran a similar report, noting that the GOJ's consultations with Saga have been suspended since a GSDF helicopter crashed in the prefecture in February.

